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Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 4665th meeting of the Security Council, held on 13 December 2002, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Liberia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The international community and the United Nations Security Council have made joint and consistent efforts to promote peace and security in Western Africa, particularly in the Mano River Union region. Such efforts have represented a major investment of resources and capabilities. The peace process in Sierra Leone is the tangible result of those efforts. The Council will maintain its efforts and continue to promote understanding and peace in the region in order to guarantee that the peace process in Sierra Leone, which remains fragile, takes root and benefits the people of Sierra Leone and the entire Mano River region.

"On the other hand, the Security Council is deeply concerned about the situation in Liberia and the threat it constitutes to international peace and security in the region as a result of the activities of the Government of Liberia and the continuing internal conflict in that country, including the armed attacks by the 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD). The internal conflict and significant violence in Liberia are producing widespread refugee flows and displacement of people in Liberia, exacerbating the humanitarian situation and fuelling the movement of irregular combatants and the flow of weapons throughout the region. The Council condemns the failure of the Government to comply with the Council's demands in resolution 1343 (2001) of 7 March 2001, and the failure of the Government, other States, and others, including the LURD, to respect the measures imposed in that resolution, including the continuing import of weapons in breach of the arms embargo. All of these developments threaten the peace process in Sierra Leone, the stability of the entire West African region, and, most tragically, are causing great humanitarian suffering for the Liberian people themselves.

"To address the situation in Liberia and the threat it poses to international peace and security in the region, the Security Council and the international community should cooperate on a comprehensive strategy that mobilizes international efforts to reach a ceasefire, resolve the internal conflict and establish an inclusive peace process; promotes peace and national reconciliation in Liberia and the development of a stable and democratic

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political process; addresses humanitarian issues; combats the illicit flow of weapons into the country; and guarantees human rights. The Council is committed to support the efforts of regional and other international actors to carry out such a strategy.

"Such a strategy must be based on two fundamental principles. First, it must have the input of key regional actors and be part of a comprehensive approach to building an integrated system of regional peace and security. Second, peace and security in the Mano River Union region requires the President of Liberia to engage constructively with the international community in working to achieve national reconciliation and political reform in Liberia.

"With these principles in mind, the Security Council's work on a coordinated strategy with the international community will promote the following objectives:

"In terms of the regional perspective, the Security Council will maintain its support for the Rabat Process, under the sponsorship of the King of Morocco, and strongly encourage Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to follow up on their commitments to undertake confidence-building measures and the establishment of security measures along their shared borders. In this connection, the Council considers that the initiative taken by the Presidents of the three countries to hold a direct dialogue in order to give impetus to the Rabat Process is a most desirable development. The Council urges the President of Liberia to actively participate in those meetings.

"The Security Council expresses its strong support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on small arms and light weapons in the region. The Council encourages the ECOWAS countries to implement these commitments fully and to strengthen the implementation mechanisms in order to stop the illegal trade of arms, in particular the flow of small arms and light weapons into Liberia.

"The Security Council commends the efforts made by ECOWAS, and that of the newly established International Contact Group on Liberia, to promote peace and stability in Liberia and in the Mano River region. The Council considers that the active involvement of these mechanisms is critical for national reconciliation and political reform.

"In this regard, the Security Council encourages the African Union and ECOWAS member States actively to promote the full implementation of existing security arrangements as well as further initiatives designed to support such arrangements among the countries of the Mano River Union.

"The Security Council reiterates its demands to the Government of Liberia to comply with resolutions 1343 (2001) and 1408 (2002) and to all parties to respect the measures which those resolutions imposed and extended. The demands referred to in those resolutions must be met for these measures to be terminated in accordance with those resolutions. The Council takes note of the positions of the African Union and ECOWAS on the sanctions regime in Liberia. The Council will keep sanctions under review to ensure they are consistent with this statement and resolutions 1343 (2001) and 1408 (2002) and will continue to monitor whether sanctions are having any humanitarian impact on the population of Liberia.

"The Security Council urges all States in the region to honour their commitments to prevent armed individuals from using their national territory to prepare and launch attacks on neighbouring countries. The Council reminds again all States of their obligations to comply with the embargo on the sale or supply of arms and related materiel to Liberia imposed by resolution 1343 (2001). The Council underlines that the embargo applies to all sales or supplies to any recipient in Liberia, including all non-State actors such as the LURD.

"In terms of a constructive engagement in Liberia, in particular by the President of Liberia on achieving the objectives of ending the violence and promoting national reconciliation, the Security Council is committed to promote:

"An expanded role for the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), along with the more active participation of the recently created United Nations Office for West Africa. In this regard, the Council welcomes the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia and urges the Government of Liberia to cooperate fully with the activities of UNOL. The Council would like UNOL to carry out, inter alia, the following tasks:

- Offering assistance to the Liberian authorities and to the public for strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, including the promotion of an independent press and an enabling environment for political parties to operate freely in Liberia;
- Contributing to and monitoring the preparation of free and fair elections in 2003, especially through the promotion of an independent electoral commission;
- Enhancing and monitoring respect for human rights in Liberia, including through constructive dialogue with the Government of Liberia, with particular attention to reaching out to local civil society groups and to encouraging the establishment of an independent and functional human rights commission;
- Promoting national reconciliation and resolution of the conflict, including through support for initiatives on the ground;
- Supporting the Government of Liberia in the implementation of peace agreements to be adopted;
- Engaging in an educational campaign to present accurately United Nations policies and activities regarding Liberia.

"The Security Council has written to the Secretary-General recommending such a strengthening of the mandate of UNOL and requesting reports every three months.

"The Security Council considers that an urgent effort is required to improve the serious humanitarian situation in Liberia, especially to address the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees. In that regard, the Council urges the Government of Liberia and the combatants, particularly the rebel group LURD, to provide unrestricted access to United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations to areas where refugees need to

be assisted and human rights protected. Likewise, the Council encourages neighbouring countries of Liberia to continue to give access to international humanitarian organizations and non-governmental humanitarian groups to border areas where refugees and displaced people are. It calls on all States in the region to respect fully international law on the treatment of refugees and displaced persons.

"The Security Council urges all humanitarian organizations and donor countries to continue to provide humanitarian relief to the refugees and internally displaced persons.

"The Security Council is committed to support efforts to promote national reconciliation, the restoration of peace and the creation of new conditions for internal political stability. For that purpose, the Council urges the Government of Liberia and the LURD to conclude a ceasefire agreement and a comprehensive peace process, including provision for disarmament and demobilization of combatants and comprehensive security sector reform. In this regard, the Council calls upon all States to refrain from providing any military support to all parties in Liberia and from any act that might aggravate the situation on the borders between Liberia and its neighbours.

"The Security Council calls on the Government of Liberia to work to create a favourable environment so that a genuine national reconciliation conference can succeed, with the broad participation of all groups in Liberian society, based inside the country and abroad.

"The Security Council also calls on the Government of Liberia to implement the necessary measures and political reforms which are a prerequisite for universal, free, fair, transparent and all-inclusive elections in 2003. The Council stresses the importance of a broad and overall participation in this process by all political parties and the return of all political leaders to the country.

"The Security Council calls upon the international community to consider how it can support through financial and technical assistance any disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme that may be established as part of cessation of hostilities and commitment to political reform in Liberia. Special attention and resources should be given to assist women and children in the process of their reintegration and to provide opportunities for young ex-combatants and child soldiers to be fully reintegrated into society.

"The Security Council recognizes that the success of a comprehensive international strategy to Liberia rests on the direct and active involvement of the African Union, ECOWAS, and the International Contact Group, working with the United Nations Offices in the region in accordance with their mandates.

"The Security Council calls on the Government of Liberia to cooperate with all these efforts as a means to find a peaceful solution of the conflict, reform its political processes and fulfil its humanitarian, social and economic responsibilities to the Liberian people. Liberia's cooperation is also essential to restore fully relations with its neighbours and to normalize its relations with the international community.

"As the Government of Liberia makes progress working with the international community in achieving the objectives set out in this statement, the Council calls on the international community to consider how it might help future economic development in Liberia aimed at improving the welfare of the people of Liberia.

"The Security Council will remain engaged with the Liberian Government and its people, given the Council's conviction that peace in that country will put an end to the suffering of the Liberian people and find a basis for lasting peace in the region.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to monitor the situation in Liberia and to keep the Council informed of developments to fulfil the objectives described herein. The Council is considering sending a mission to the region, including to Liberia, to assess the situation during the first half of 2003."